

Message Text

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14

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 FEA-01 ERDA-05 AID-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00

CIEP-01 COME-00 DODE-00 EB-07 FPC-01 H-02 INR-07

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SAM-01 OES-03 SP-02 SS-15 STR-04 TRSE-00 CEQ-01

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R 242345Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8918

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SENV, ENRG, CA

SUBJ: BEAUFORT SEA CONSULTATIONS

1. ENVIRONMENT MINISTER MARCHAND AND I DISCUSSED BEAUFORT SEA PROBLEM DURING COURSE OF A PROTOCOL CALL ON HIM TODAY, FEBRUARY 24. MARCHAND SAID CABINET IS SCHEDULED TO TAKE UP LICENSE ISSUANCE FOR DRILLING ON MARCH 11. HE COULD ASK FOR A DEFERRAL, BUT INTIMATED THAT HE IS UNDER CONSIDERABLE PRESSURE TO KEEP THE SCHEDULE, AND THUS TO ISSUE THE LICENSES IN TIME FOR THE SUMMER DRILLING SEASON.

2. MARCHAND MADE CLEAR, HOWEVER, THAT HE WOULD BE HELD RESPONSIBLE IF AN UNCONTROLLED BLOW-OUT DID OCCUR, AND EXPRESSED A STRONG DESIRE FOR CONSULTATIONS PRIOR TO THE CABINET MEETING.

3. I SAID WE THOUGHT IT WAS ESSENTIAL TO HAVE SUCH CONSULTATIONS, BUT HAD YET TO RECEIVE THE BACKGROUND INFORMATION IN THE CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT, AND THUS WOULD HAVE DIFFICULTY IN MEETING ON SUCH A SHORT
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TIMETABLE. MARCHAND PROMISED TO GET THE BACKGROUND

MATERIAL TO US IMMEDIATELY. (EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED THREE OF THIRTY-NINE DETAILED REPORTS WHICH COMPRIZE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND HAS FORWARDED THEM TODAY TO DEPT. HOWEVER, WE HAVE BEEN ADVISED BY WORKING LEVELS THAT MAJORITY OF REMAINING REPORTS WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE PRIOR TO BEGINNING OF MARCH.)

4. COMMENT: IT IS VERY CLEAR THAT DOME PETROLEUM AND THE ENERGY INTERESTS WANT TO MOVE BEAUFORT SEA LICENSING THROUGH THE CABINET QUICKLY. PERFUNCTORY CONSULTATION WITH US WOULD GIVE THEM SOME PROTECTION IF ANYTHING GOES WRONG, WITHOUT KNOCKING THEM OFF SCHEDULE. GIVEN OUR OWN INTERESTS IN THE BEAUFORT SEA AND UPCOMING LICENSE DECISIONS, WE SHOULD INSIST ON A SERIOUS AND FULL CONSULTATION, BUT IF AT ALL POSSIBLE WITHIN THE TIME FRAME MARCHAND SUGGESTS. I DO THINK THAT WE SHOULD INSIST ON TIME TO ABSORB THE BACKGROUND STUDIES THE CANADIANS HAVE DONE BEFORE MEETING, AND IF THERE IS NOT ENOUGH TIME BEFORE MARCH 11 I WILL ASK MARCHAND FOR A SHORT DELAY.

5. PLEASE ADVISE ON CURRENT PLANNING FOR SUCH A MEETING, WHICH SHOULD HAVE OIL AND GAS EXPERTS AS WELL AS ENVIRONMENTAL AND SECSTATE OFFICIALS PRESENT.

ENDERS

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